



Geometries of Belonging: Stories & Poems from the Birdverse

R.B. Lemberg

Fairwood Press (Nov 29, 2022)

Softcover \$18.99 (268pp)

978-1-958880-01-2

A collection of stories and poems, R. B. Lemberg's *Geometries of Belonging* compiles and expands on the immersive fantasy world of the Birdverse.

The collection's greatest strength is its balance—not a single note is wasted or misplaced in this fantastical symphony. Loss pairs with triumph, redemption clashes with betrayal, and searching (for belonging, purpose, answers, and love) is a unifying theme. Love is present in all its forms, depicted as both a saving grace and a destructive force; the unadorned, at times unflattering verisimilitude of these depictions brings resonant realism to the high-fantasy atmosphere.

Some entries play on stories from within the Birdverse: "Grandmother-nai-Leylit's Cloth of Winds" draws on the novella *The Four Profound Weaves*; "Ranra's Unbalancing" and "Where Your Quince Trees Grow" mine familiar territory for readers of *The Unbalancing*. Whether drawing from established Birdverse lore or not, all entries are devoid of exposition, a hallmark of Lemberg's prose; the world of the Birdverse reveals itself only as much as is necessary, and always in its own time.

"The Desert Glassmaker and the Jeweler of Brevyar" is a standout addition. The epistolary entry tracks years of correspondance between Vadrai, a jeweler who lives in the northern forests, and Maru, a desert glassmaker. Their tender vulnerability and fierce passion for their crafts and for each other is stirring. And "Geometries of Belonging" is poignant in its close narration. Parét, a mind healer, is summoned to help gender-nonconforming Dedéi, whose family believes their nonbinary nature is due to sickness. Parét is determined to help Dedéi, but political machinations by Dedéi's grandfather, a rival of Parét's lord and lover, make assistance a risky endeavor.

Human connection and resilience are the most powerful magic of all in the fantasy collection *Geometries of Belonging*.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (November / December 2022)

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